



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office

Atlanta Federal Center

1924 Building

100 Alabama St., S.W.

Atlanta, Georgia 30303



(SER-PC)

JUL 27 2007

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Cape Lookout National Seashore

From: Regional Director, Southeast Region, *PAUL A. MOORE*

Subject: Finding of No Significant Impact for the Cape Lookout Village Historic Structures Reuse Implementation Plan

Attached please find the signed Finding of No Significant Impact for the Village historic structures reuse plan at Cape Lookout National Seashore.

If you require further assistance or information, please contact the Chief, Planning and Compliance Division, at 404-562-3124.

Attachment

cc:

SER-D

SER-PC

Reading

Jhammond:jh:7/24/07

TAKE PRIDE
IN AMERICA 

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CAPE LOOKOUT VILLAGE HISTORIC STRUCTURES
REUSE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / ASSESSMENT OF EFFECT

CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE
CARTARET COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

The National Park Service (NPS) proposes to rehabilitate and adaptively use selected historic structures in the Cape Lookout Village Historic District for NPS administrative and interpretive purposes, and to accommodate overnight visitor lodging under a concessions operation. The historic district is located near the southern end of South Core Banks, and encompasses the Cape Lookout Lighthouse area, former U.S. Coast Guard Station, and central residential village area. The primary focus of this project is on the treatment and use of structures within the central residential village portion of the district. Many of the structures (formerly occupied by private leaseholders as seasonal fishing cottages or used for other purposes) have sustained varying degrees of deterioration as a result of the harsh environment of the Outer Banks and limited regular maintenance over the last several years. The proposed undertaking will serve to protect and preserve the historical integrity of the district and its cultural landscape while fulfilling visitor use and interpretive objectives. The action is also taken in response to a court order issued in 2002 requiring the national seashore to

“...conduct a public planning process to formulate a policy for the uses of the subject structures and other similar structures within the national seashore. During this process, the National Park Service will consider a range of uses of the structures including, but not limited to, leasing, employee housing, administrative purposes, or demolition, in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and policies.” [Warren J. Davis, et. al., Plaintiffs, v. United States of America, et. al., Defendants. Case No. 4:01-CV-117-H(3). September 4, 2002]

The project is consistent with the purpose of the national seashore to conserve and preserve for public use and enjoyment the outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values of a dynamic coastal barrier island environment. It is also consistent with objectives of the national seashore’s 1982 General Management Plan with regard to resource management (i.e. to maintain the seashore in a natural condition, to conduct needed basic research, and preserve significant historic resources); visitor use and interpretation (i.e. to provide visitors with interpretation of, and access to, seashore resources in a fashion that avoids or limits environmental impacts); and development (i.e. to limit Outer Banks facilities to those that are essential for visitor use, safety, and resource management, with primary facility development reserved for the mainland unit of the national seashore).

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The selected alternative (alternative D) is the preferred alternative from the reuse implementation plan and environmental assessment. Under this alternative the national seashore will stabilize 14 historic structures in the village area. Four of these structures have already been stabilized due to emergency conditions – the Lewis-Davis House, the Guthrie-Ogilvie House, Fishing Cottage No. 2, and the Seifert-Davis House. Fishing Cottage No. 1 (determined non-contributing to the significance of the district and also condemned for occupancy) has been removed, and other non-contributing district outbuildings will also be removed. The non-contributing Les and Sally

Moore House / Store and the main U.S. Coast Guard Station building at the south end of the district will continue to be used by non-profit environmental education programs. Space for two NPS staff / volunteers will continue to be provided in the 1873 Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters at the lighthouse complex.

Of the 14 village structures that will be stabilized, up to four will be further rehabilitated for NPS use and occupancy, and eight will be renovated for interpretation to the public. At a minimum, eight structures will be rehabilitated for use by a concessions operator to accommodate visitor overnight stays. Individual structures might be used for more than one purpose (i.e., public interpretation and NPS administrative use). Rehabilitation will conform with the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (May, 2006). The structures will be connected to potable water piped from an existing well in the lighthouse area. Electricity is presently delivered from the mainland at Harkers Island and is available in the lighthouse area. The electrical system will be extended to the central village area. The outmoded system requires upgrading or replacement to meet current use requirements, as well as the additional operational needs of the village. A new central wastewater treatment system will be constructed. The location of the system has not been selected.

Three structures (the 1887 Life-Saving Station, the 1924 Life-Saving Station Boat House, and the 1907 Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters) will be relocated from the central village portion of the district to their original site locations at the lighthouse and coast guard areas. Additional future investigations (e.g., structural engineering and site condition appraisals) will be completed as necessary to ensure the feasibility of relocating the structures while preserving their historic integrity. In accordance with the recommendations of the draft cultural landscape report for the historic district, selective vegetation clearing will be undertaken to reduce the risk to structures from fire and hazard tree limbs, and to provide a semblance of the more open views that existed during the district's period of significance.

Mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce the potential adverse impacts of the selected alternative. These measures will include provisions for stopping construction in the event previously undiscovered archeological resources or human remains are unearthed; marking sensitive cultural resources for avoidance by construction activities; confining construction to clearly delineated zones and including resource protection requirements in construction specifications; best management practices to minimize soil erosion and the introduction of exotic plants; designation of approved construction fueling areas with adequate procedures for clean-up of fuel spills and hazardous materials; providing advance notification of construction to visitors and marking construction zones to ensure visitor safety; conducting engineering assessments prior to relocating historic structures and implementing other protection / monitoring measures during transit; carrying out measures to minimize nitrogen levels in treated effluent and the introduction of treated freshwater into the estuarine environment; limiting and shielding artificial outdoor lighting; etc.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The environmental assessment prepared for this project analyzed the preferred alternative (D, described above), a no-action alternative, and four other alternatives (A, B, C and E). Under all alternatives, 14 historic structures would be stabilized and selected non-contributing structures would be removed. Non-profit environmental education programs would continue to use the Les and Sally Moore House / Store buildings, and the main U.S. Coast Guard Station building at the south end of the district. Space for NPS staff / volunteers would be provided in the 1873 Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters.

Under the no-action alternative, village structures would not be rehabilitated for overnight occupancy or connected to potable water lines. However, selected structures would be connected to electrical service and two new septic systems. Limited exterior interpretation of the structures would be provided. No structures would be relocated. Limited vegetation clearing would be implemented to reduce the risk from fire and hazard tree limbs.

Under alternative A, three village structures would be rehabilitated for NPS use, and three would be renovated for public interpretation. Some structures could be used for more than one purpose. Structures would be connected to potable water and electrical systems, and three new septic systems. No structures would be relocated. Selective vegetation clearing would be carried out to partially restore historic views.

Under alternative B, four village structures would be rehabilitated for NPS use, and seven would be renovated for public interpretation. Some structures could be used for more than one purpose. Structures would be connected to potable water and electrical systems, and a central wastewater treatment system. Three historic structures would be relocated to original site locations. Selective vegetation clearing would be carried out to partially restore historic views.

Under alternative C, four village structures would be rehabilitated for NPS use, and eight would be renovated for public interpretation. Three structures would be rehabilitated for use by private leaseholders. Some structures could be used for more than one purpose. Structures would be connected to potable water and electrical systems, and a central wastewater treatment system. Three historic structures would be relocated to original site locations. Selective vegetation clearing would be carried out to partially restore historic views.

Under alternative E, up to four village structures would be rehabilitated for NPS use, and eight would be renovated for public interpretation. At a minimum, eight structures would be rehabilitated for use by either a concessions operator or private leaseholders. Some structures could be used for more than one purpose. Structures would be connected to potable water and electrical systems, and a central wastewater treatment system. Three historic structures would be relocated to original site locations. Selective vegetation clearing would be carried out to partially restore historic views.

The planning team evaluated the alternatives using a process called “Choosing by Advantages” (CBA) to identify and compare the relative advantages of each alternative according to a set of criteria derived from the primary issues and impact topics. Alternatives were evaluated to see how well they would: 1) maximize protection of cultural and natural resources, e.g., the Cape Lookout Village Historic District, wetlands, and vegetation, 2) provide for quality visitor experiences – comfort, convenience, interpretation, understanding of resources, etc., and 3) provide for public health and safety. The alternatives were rated on attributes relating to each of the above-listed factors and the advantages of the attributes were compared. Alternative D was selected as the preferred alternative because it had a high number of important advantages and therefore achieved the highest score of the six alternatives evaluated.

No additional alternatives for the reuse of structures in the historic district were considered or subsequently dismissed from further evaluation.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which is guided by the Council on

Environmental Quality (CEQ). The CEQ provided direction that “[t]he environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101:

- 1 fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- 2 assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- 3 attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- 4 preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- 5 achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and
- 6 enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.”

As evaluated in this document, the preferred alternative (D) is the environmentally preferred alternative. The preferred alternative best meets the six criteria presented in the National Environmental Policy Act (section 101).

All the alternatives equivalently address criteria 1, 2, and 6 by providing for the preservation of historic district structures and cultural landscape features in a safe, healthful, and environmentally responsible and sustainable manner. The no action alternative best meets criterion 3 because it does not call for rehabilitation and occupancy of structures in the historic district, and consequently would not require the increased level of supporting utility systems and associated environmental impacts entailed by the construction and operation of these systems as required by the action alternatives.

All the alternatives provide for stabilization of contributing buildings in the historic district. However, alternatives D and E best fulfill criterion 4 by further proposing that rehabilitation be carried out for the largest number of buildings (up to four for NPS use and eight, at a minimum, for a concessions operator or private leaseholders). Whereas stabilization would remove safety hazards, and provide the buildings initial short-term protection by means of structural reinforcement and measures to make them weather-resistant, rehabilitation accompanied by adaptive use and occupancy would more effectively ensure the long-term preservation of these properties.

Alternatives C, D, and E each provide for the greatest number of structures in the historic district that would be interpreted to the public (eight structures), and alternatives D and E also maximize the number of structures (minimum of eight) that would be available for public use and occupancy. Alternative D, however, best meets criterion 5 by calling for a concessions operator to manage the leased properties for visitor occupancy, thereby making them available to a wider segment of the visiting population than would otherwise be expected if some were privately leased.

WHY THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

Long-term beneficial impacts will occur to the Cape Lookout Village Historic District as a result of the proposed preservation undertakings, including stabilization and rehabilitation of selected structures in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. At a minimum, the structures will be structurally reinforced, weatherized and other actions taken as necessary to correct unsafe conditions. In addition, further rehabilitation will be carried out for structures selected for NPS use and visitor occupancy. Relocation of three structures (the 1887 Life-Saving Station, the 1924 Life-Saving Station Boat House, and the 1907 Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters) from the central village portion of the district to their original site locations at the lighthouse and coast guard areas will serve to more accurately reflect the historical context and clustered configuration that existed during the district's period of significance. Vegetation thinning in approved areas will reduce the threat of fire that could damage nearby buildings, and will enhance views and the visual orientation and connection that historically existed among the buildings.

Although no national register-listed or eligible archeological resources have been identified in the project area, ground disturbance associated with project-related undertakings (e.g., installation of water and electrical lines, construction of a central wastewater treatment system, and vegetation clearing) have the potential to impact presently unknown archeological resources. As appropriate, archeological surveys and/or monitoring will precede all ground disturbing activities. In the unlikely event that archeological resources could not be avoided, an appropriate mitigation strategy would be developed in consultation with the state historic preservation officer. Prior to the relocation of three historic structures to their original site locations, a survey for archeological resources in the general vicinity of the affected structures will also be conducted. Any adverse impacts to archeological resources that could not be avoided would be long term or permanent and minor to moderate in intensity.

Negligible short-term adverse impacts to vegetation will result from removal of some vegetation to provide defensible space around the historic structures and to partially restore the character and views associated with the district's period of significance. However, the long-term impacts of removing aged, diseased and hazard tree limbs and other vegetation materials, thinning remaining vegetation, and removing invasive species will be beneficial for the remaining vegetation, and negligibly adverse for vegetation completely removed. Some vegetation will be disturbed or removed to install electrical lines, potable water lines, and the wastewater treatment system. The extent of disturbance for the electric lines will be localized, with negligible long-term adverse impacts. Installing the potable water lines and the infrastructure for the central wastewater treatment system will disturb village vegetation over a larger area, resulting in long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts.

Although the volume of wastewater will increase with use and occupancy of the structures, the impacts on water quality in the surficial aquifer will be long-term and negligibly adverse because the wastewater will be treated to meet state standards. In the long term, the volume of effluent discharged into the aquifer could have both beneficial and adverse impacts on seashore habitats. The impact on terrestrial systems will be beneficial because of the increased amount of freshwater available to island vegetation and potentially to wildlife through the freshwater wetlands. If the volume of effluent discharged exceeds the assimilative capacity of the aquifer, there could be a long-term adverse impact on estuarine and marine systems. These adverse impacts, however, would be localized and negligible to minor.

Long-term moderate adverse impacts on national seashore operations will occur as a result of the increased expense and requirements for NPS facilities management staff to stabilize, rehabilitate, and maintain historic structures and carry out other proposed undertakings. Stabilization of 14 structures and rehabilitation of approximately 12 structures in the historic district will require substantial management of construction activities necessary to make the properties safe, weather-resistant, structurally sound, and suited for adaptive use. In addition to addressing standard construction practices, the facilities staff will have the further responsibilities of ensuring that approved stabilization, rehabilitation, and ongoing preservation maintenance are carried out in accordance with the *Secretary's Standards* to avoid the loss or damage of historic fabric and character-defining features. Other project actions requiring facilities management oversight are renovation of space in the 1873 lighthouse keeper's quarters for NPS staff and volunteers; connection of village structures to upgraded electrical service and potable water; construction of a central wastewater treatment system; relocation of three historic structures to their original site locations; management of the cultural landscape; and ongoing maintenance of the district's infrastructure.

The expense associated with delivery of construction materials to the cape is anticipated to increase the initial capital outlay for construction compared with similar construction on the mainland. The costs associated with implementing the above actions will need to be addressed by additional funding allocations to the national seashore's budget for short-term capital improvements and long-term operations. It may be necessary for additional staff to be hired within the facilities / maintenance division (e.g., wastewater facilities technician) and/or that increased NPS law enforcement or interpretive ranger presence be provided in the historic district to address the greater levels of visitor use. The adverse impacts on the national seashore's budgetary allocations for maintenance operations and staffing will be both short term and long term, and moderate.

Visitors to the Cape Lookout Village Historic District will have opportunities to explore the district and view stabilized and rehabilitated historic structures. A minimum of eight structures will be rehabilitated for use by a concessions operator, which will provide visitors with overnight / extended-stay opportunities. Visitors will also continue to visit the district on a day-use basis. Eight structures will be renovated for interpretation which will further visitor understanding of the cape's social and architectural history. Enhanced interpretation, opportunities for visitor overnight stays, and selective vegetation clearing to provide visitors a greater sense of the more open views that existed during the district's period of significance, will have long-term beneficial impacts on visitor use and experience. Noise and other disruptions associated with construction activities in the historic district may introduce short-term minor to moderate adverse impacts on visitor use and experience, but these impacts will last only as long as the period of construction.

The following subjects or resource topics were dismissed from further analysis in the environmental assessment: ethnographic resources; museum collections; Indian trust resources; air quality; floodplains; wetlands; geologic resources; hazardous materials; lightscapes; soundscapes; prime and unique farmland; wilderness; wildlife; threatened and endangered species; environmental justice; and socioeconomics. These subjects were dismissed because no or negligible impacts were foreseen as a result of the proposed project actions. With regard to wetlands and floodplains, future compliance will be required (perhaps including statements of findings) pending future site-specific designs for a wastewater treatment system and management decisions affecting the uses of selected structures in the historic district.

Degree of effect on public health or safety: All project construction activities will be carried out in accordance with approved safety standards and guidelines, and consequently no direct adverse

effects are anticipated on public health and safety during the construction period. As presented in the mitigation measures of the EA, construction zones will be clearly delineated to confine activity to the minimum areas required. Workers will be adequately informed of all safety and resource protection measures and these will be clearly identified in the construction specifications. Although the use of heavy equipment during construction will generate some exhaust emissions, dust and noise, the adverse impacts resulting from these activities will be short-term and localized. Negligible adverse impacts on public health and safety are therefore anticipated from construction noise and emissions.

Visitors will be provided advance notification of proposed construction and will be directed away from construction areas and equipment to avoid safety hazards and minimize visitor use conflicts. All new utility systems will be constructed in accordance with approved standards, and the wastewater treatment system will meet the standards for effluent discharge. The National Park Service will ensure that all historic properties proposed for occupancy, adaptive use and interpretation are free of hazardous materials, and meet accepted health, safety and accessibility standards.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas: The dynamic coastal environment of the Outer Banks has been dramatically shaped by prevailing winds, storms, tides, and the littoral drift of sand along the shorelines. The Outer Banks were created by sand deposition and are constantly in motion, generally moving in a southwesterly direction towards the mainland. Storm overwash typically results in sand from the eastern (ocean) side of the islands being redeposited on the western (sound) side. Salt marshes fringe low lying areas on the sound side.

All but the tallest dunes on Cape Lookout are within the 100-year floodplain and the coastal high hazard area. However, the historic district receives some protection from winds and storm surges by the dune system that parallels the shoreline along the Atlantic side of the cape. The district is also located at the widest part of the barrier island, and is consequently afforded a relatively greater degree of protection from storm surges and overwash than other more exposed locations. In March 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers delineated wetlands in the vicinity of the historic district. Future compliance (perhaps including statements of findings) will be required for potential impacts on floodplains and wetlands pending future site-specific designs for a wastewater treatment system and final management decisions affecting the uses of selected structures in the historic district. All undertakings will be designed to minimize adverse impacts on wetlands, floodplain processes, and potential risks to life and property. Prime farmlands, threatened and endangered species, and ecologically critical areas will not be affected by the project.

The project area encompasses the Cape Lookout Village Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in June 2000. The national register nomination identified 27 contributing properties clustered in three primary areas: the lighthouse complex at the northern end of the district that includes the 1859 Cape Lookout Lighthouse, 1873 Keeper's Quarters and other structures; the U.S. Coast Guard Station Complex - developed about 1916 on the site of the earlier 1887 Life-Saving Station at the southern end of the district; and the central village area of former private dwellings constructed between approximately 1915 and 1950. The 1887 Life-Saving Station, the 1924 Life-Saving Station Boat House, and the 1907 Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters are contributing structures that were moved in the 1950s from their original locations by the lighthouse and coast guard areas to the central village area. The district's period of significance spans the years from 1857 when construction began on the lighthouse, to

approximately 1950. The cultural landscape of the historic district has been thoroughly documented, and is identified as a contributing component of the district's national register significance.

The American Bird Conservancy has designated the national seashore a Globally Important Bird Area in recognition of the numerous bird species who use the barrier islands for nesting, feeding, and as a wintering or migratory resting spot. While some limited vegetation thinning or removal is proposed in the historic district, this is not expected to fragment or irreparably disturb critical habitat for these bird populations or other wildlife.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: There were no highly controversial effects identified during either preparation of the EA or the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks: There were no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks identified during either preparation of the EA or the public review period.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration: The preferred alternative neither establishes a NPS precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts: Other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions were analyzed for the potential to contribute cumulative impacts to the impacts associated with implementation of the selected alternative. Actions potentially contributing to cumulative impacts include 1) ongoing rehabilitation of the lighthouse and planned opening of the structure for daily visitation; 2) shoreline stabilization and beach renourishment measures completed in 2006 to control erosion by the lighthouse area; 3) implementation of selected treatment recommendations presented in the cultural landscape report for the historic district; 4) visitor use and orientation improvements in the vicinity of the lighthouse including a new comfort station and visitor contact station, public parking area, and new sections of boardwalk; and 5) management of threatened and endangered species through the *Interim Protected Species Management Plan*.

Implementation of the above actions will have long-term beneficial impacts on the historic buildings, structures, and cultural landscape features contributing to the significance of the Cape Lookout Village Historic District. The overall cumulative impact on historic properties by implementation of the selected alternative (D) together with the impacts of these other actions will also be long-term and beneficial. Although no national register-eligible archeological resources have been identified in the project area, the selected alternative has the potential to contribute a small component of adverse impacts to the overall minor to moderate adverse cumulative impacts anticipated to have occurred to archeological resources from previous disturbances.

The past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions identified above were not considered as contributing to cumulative impacts on vegetation or water quality in the project area. Long-term minor to moderate adverse cumulative impacts on NPS operations at the national seashore are anticipated because of the additional costs and demands on the facilities management division

for increased construction and ongoing maintenance. Overall beneficial cumulative impacts are anticipated on visitor use and experience from implementation of the selected alternative together with the beneficial impacts of the other actions.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources: Proposed project undertakings will not adversely affect historic buildings, structures, and cultural landscape features identified as contributing to the significance of the Cape Lookout Village Historic District. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act was completed through consultation with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The SHPO concurred with the NPS finding that the alternatives presented in the plan will have no adverse effect on the district's historic properties (letter to Robert Vogel, Superintendent, March 30, 2007). As requested by the SHPO, the national seashore will provide the SHPO opportunities to review and comment on plans / specifications for the treatment of the historic structures; construction and location of proposed new infrastructure; any changes in historic circulation patterns; and the relocation of historic buildings to original sites.

One of the houses in the central village area, the Setzer–Dawsey House, was listed as a non-contributing property in the 2000 national register nomination for the historic district. An NPS architectural reappraisal of the property (April, 2007) revealed that much of the building's original form and historic fabric remained intact but was concealed within later additions. The house may date to the 1920s. An outbuilding, also recommended as a contributing property, may have been relocated from the lighthouse area. Based on the recent reevaluation of the Setzer–Dawsey House as a contributing property, and in consultation with the SHPO, the National Park Service has reconsidered its earlier decision to remove the house as was presented in the environmental assessment. The National Park Service will instead stabilize and/or rehabilitate the house in conformance with other planned preservation treatments for the district's historic structures.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat: The National Park Service consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources to determine if proposed project actions would affect threatened, endangered, or state species of concern. Identified threatened and endangered species at Cape Lookout include the piping plover; loggerhead, leatherback and green sea turtles; and seabeach amaranth (a threatened plant species that grows in dune areas). Several State species of concern were identified (i.e., little blue heron, snowy egret, tricolored heron, glossy ibis, gull-billed tern, common tern, least tern, black skimmer, loggerhead shrike, brown pelican, peregrine falcon, Outer Banks king snake, and Carolina diamondback terrapin).

In a letter dated April 17, 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the National Park Service finding that the project is not likely to adversely affect any federally-listed endangered or threatened species, their formally designated critical habitat, or species currently proposed for listing. The national seashore staff also indicated that no species of State concern are known to feed, nest, or rest in the project area. Implementation of the selected alternative will contribute to increased visitation in the vicinity of the historic district, and will entail localized removal of vegetation around historic structures to reduce fire hazards and enhance views. Vegetation removal will be phased over time and no vegetation type will be completely removed from the project area. Although these actions could result in some minor disturbance of potential

wildlife habitat, the impacts will be limited and will not adversely impact ecosystem functions or biodiversity.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local environmental protection law: The preferred alternative violates no Federal, State, or local environmental protection laws.

IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES OR VALUES

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the Cape Lookout National Seashore Superintendent determined that implementation of the preferred alternative will not constitute an impairment of the national seashore's resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the impacts described in the EA, the agency and public comments received, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker in accordance with NPS *Management Policies*, 2006. As described in the EA, implementation of the preferred alternative will not result in major adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of Cape Lookout National Seashore; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the national seashore; or (3) identified as a goal in the national seashore's general management plan (GMP) or other relevant NPS planning documents.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

During the preparation of this reuse implementation plan and environmental assessment, the National Park Service has consulted with public agencies, organizations, and individuals having a stake in the project.

Internal NPS scoping was conducted at national seashore headquarters on February 10-11, 2004. National seashore, NPS Southeast Regional Office (SER), and NPS Denver Service Center (DSC) staff conducted a public scoping workshop on April 24, 2004. National seashore, SER, and DSC staff also conducted work sessions at the national seashore on June 22-23, 2004 and November 8-10, 2004 to develop plan alternatives. A "Choosing by Advantages" (CBA) workshop was subsequently held March 1-2, 2005 to select the preferred alternative.

Public meetings on the preferred alternative were conducted on January 25-26, 2005. Presentations on the plan were made by national seashore Superintendent Bob Vogel to the following groups:

- North Carolina Maritime Museum, (Director, Beaufort, NC).
- Cape Lookout Environmental Education Center (Board).
- Friends of Cape Lookout, (Board, Moorhead City, NC).

In a letter dated April 17, 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the National Park Service's finding that the project is not likely to adversely affect any federally-listed endangered or threatened species, their formally designated critical habitat, or species currently proposed for listing. In a letter dated April 13, 2007, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Division of Coastal Management) notified the national seashore that no comments were received from State agencies having a regulatory interest in the proposed project to indicate that the project is inconsistent with the State's coastal management program. The Division of Coastal Management conditionally concurred with the consistency determination for the NPS preferred alternative with the provisions that the National Park Service 1) carry out the mitigation measures presented in the planning document, 2) submit an erosion

and sediment control plan to the North Carolina Division of Land Resources for land-disturbing activities greater than one acre, and 3) consult and obtain concurrence with the State Historic Preservation Office before initiating work on the historic structures.

A representative from the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), visited the historic district and participated in planning meetings with NPS staff to provide input on the proposed undertakings. In a letter dated October 30, 2006, the National Park Service notified the SHPO about the current project, and the intent to evaluate impacts on cultural resources in accordance with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The SHPO concurred with the NPS finding of no adverse effect in a letter dated March 30, 2007.

Information about this project was placed on the NPS planning website in 2004. A draft of this document was placed on the national seashore's website for public review.

CONCLUSION

The selected alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement. The selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and no major environmental impacts are foreseen. There are no significant adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, historic properties either listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any Federal, State, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended:

Connie Jackson Backlund 07/19/07

Connie Backlund, Acting Superintendent
Cape Lookout National Seashore

Date

Approved:

Patricia A. Hooks

Patricia A. Hooks, Director
Southeast Regional Office, NPS

7/27/07
Date

